

Smoking: No. 1 Cause of Fire Deaths in Home

Use of tobacco products continues to be the leading cause of preventable disease and death in our society. Cancer, cardio-vascular disease and emphysema are just some of the major health problems attributed to smoking. Careless smoking also continues to be the leading cause of fire deaths in the home.

The United States Fire Administration (USFA), which recently became part of Homeland Security, has partnered with the National Fire Prevention Association (NFPA) to increase public awareness and to use research-based recommendations in an attempt to change behavior and reduce smoking fire deaths in the U.S.



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According to acting USFA Administrator Charlie Dickinson, "Smoking continues to be the number one cause of residential fire deaths, which justifies a new look at research about the role of behaviors in causing those deaths. Through this partnership with NFPA, hopefully, we can reduce fire deaths from this cause."

If you smoke or live with a smoker, the USFA and the NFPA make the following recommendations:

- If you smoke, smoke outside.
- Wherever you smoke, use deep, sturdy ashtrays. Ashtrays should be set on something sturdy and hard to ignite, like an end table.
- Before you throw out butts and ashes, make sure they are out, and dowsing in water or sand is the best way to do that.
- Check under furniture cushions and in other places people smoke for cigarette butts that may have fallen out of sight.
- Smoking should not be allowed in a home where oxygen is used.
- If you smoke, choose fire-safe cigarettes. They are less likely to cause fires.
- To prevent a deadly cigarette fire, you have to be alert. You won't be if you are sleepy, have been consuming alcohol, or have taken medication or other drugs.

If you have summer parties, encourage your guests who smoke to only do so outside, but it is still good advice to check your home after a party to ensure that a carelessly discarded cigarette is not smoldering in a chair or sofa.

Of course the best advice is – if you smoke, quit!